

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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R 291430Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9859

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

USNAVCOMMSTA LONDON DERRY

AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, U.K. (N.I.)

SUBJECT: NI FEARS OF BRITISH TROOP WITHDRAWAL REMAIN
DESPITE WILSON'S ASSURANCES

FOLLOWING TRANSMITTED BY CONSULATE GENERAL BELFAST:

BEGIN SUMMARY UK PM'S APRIL 25 REASSURANCE ABOUT
BRITISH TROOPS' CONTINUING ROLE IN NI HAS CALMED PUBLIC
OPINION HERE. REPUBLICANS HAD WELCOMED MINDEF'S STATE-
MENT RAISING PROSPECT OF WITHDRAWAL, BUT ALL OTHERS
OPPOSE IT AS CAPITULATION TO IRA OR LIKELY TO LEAD TO
BLOODBATH. NEVERTHELESS MOST NI PEOPLE KNOW BRITISH ARE
TIRED OF NI SITUATION AND INDIFFERENT TO NI'S
CONTINUATION WITHIN UK, AND THEY SUSPECT POSSIBLE FUTURE
WITHDRAWAL, ESPECIALLY BY LABOUR GOVERNMENT. LOYALISTS
WANT FREE HAND FOR SELVES AGAINST IRA; PRO-ASSEMBLY
UNIONISTS AND ALLIANCE HOPE FOR STRENGTHENING OF SECURITY
ROLE OF UDR, RUC, AND EXECUTIVE; AND SDLP PINS SECURITY
HOPES ON POLITICAL SOLUTION, IMPLEMENTATION OF
SUNNINGDALE POLICING PLANS, AND EVENTUALLY COUNCIL OF
IRELAND. A FEW PEOPLE THINK BRITISH WITHDRAWAL WOULD

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TAKE WIND OUT OF IRISH REPUBLICAN SAILS AND FORCE TWO
COMMUNITIES TO COME TO AGREEMENT, AND THAT EVEN A

"BLOODBATH" IMMEDIATELY AFTER WITHDRAWAL WOULD BE SHORT AND SHARP, AND PREFERABLE TO CONTINUATION OF PRESENT SITUATION. END SUMMARY

1. UK PM WILSON'S APRIL 25 REAFFIRMATION THAT BRITISH ARMY WILL STAY IN NI IN WHATEVER STRENGTH REQUIRED TO COMBAT VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM, HAS CALMED NI PUBLIC OPINION WHICH HAD BEEN SHAKEN BY DEFENCE MINISTER MASON'S REFERENCES TO BRITISH PUBLIC PRESSURE TO BRING TROOPS HOME.

2. MASON'S COMMENTS HAD BEEN WELCOMED ONLY BY SPOKESMEN FOR PROVISIONAL SINN FEIN AND (OFFICIAL) REPUBLICAN CLUBS, WHO HAVE BEEN CALLING ALL ALONG FOR BRITISH COMMITMENT TO WITHDRAW. LOYALISTS, PRO-ASSEMBLY UNIONISTS, AND ALLIANCE HAD CONDEMNED MASON'S STATEMENT AS IRRESPONSIBLE IN LIGHT OF PRESENT LEVEL OF VIOLENCE, AND LIKELY TO ENCOURAGE PROVISIONAL IRA; SDLP OPPOSES TROOP WITHDRAWAL IN PRESENT SITUATION BECAUSE IT WOULD LEAD TO "BLOODBATH" IN WHICH BELFAST CATHOLICS COULD WELL BE CHIEF VICTIMS.

3. NEVERTHELESS, NI PEOPLE KNOW BRITISH PEOPLE ARE FED UP WITH THEIR CONTINUED SACRIFICE OF BLOOD AND TREASURE IN THIS PROVINCE, AND AT BEST INDIFFERENT TO CONTINUED UNION BETWEEN GB AND NI. MOST WILL CONTINUE TO FEAR (AND REPUBLICANS TO HOPE) THAT BRITISH GOVERNMENT MIGHT WITHDRAW TROOPS REGARDLESS OF CONSEQUENCES HERE.

4. UNIONISTS OF ALL SORTS ARE PARTICULARLY SUSPICIOUS

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OF INTENTIONS OF LABOUR GOVERNMENT, WHICH THEY BELIEVE MISHANDLED THE TROUBLES HERE IN 1969 BY TAKING SECURITY OUT OF LOCAL HANDS, AND WHICH THEY REGARD AS INSTINCTIVELY ANTI-UNIONIST AND EVEN PRO-REPUBLICAN. WHILE THESE UNIONISTS CONSIDER THEY ARE ENTITLED AS UK CITIZENS TO BRITISH FORCES' PROTECTION, THEY WOULD AGREE THAT ULSTER PEOPLE SHOULD PARTICIPATE MORE EFFECTIVELY IN SELF-DEFENSE EFFORTS. LOYALISTS WANT BRITISH ARMY TO BE ALLOWED TO "GET ON WITH THE JOB" OR ELSE "GIVE ULSTERMEN THE TOOLS" AND LET THEM PUT DOWN THE IRA, WHILE PRO-ASSEMBLY UNIONISTS AND TO SOME EXTENT ALLIANCE WANT MORE SECURITY RESPONSIBILITIES TURNED OVER TO ULSTER DEFENCE REGIMENT AND ROYAL ULSTER CONSTABULARY, AND INTERNAL SECURITY EVENTUALLY TURNED OVER TO POWER-SHARING EXECUTIVE.

5. SDLP VIEWS ON SECURITY ARE SOMEWHAT AMBIVALENT; THEY CLING TO VIEW THAT SECURITY THREAT CAN BE ELIMINATED BY POLITICAL PROGRESS ALONG LINES OF SUNNINGDALE AGREEMENT, AND WILL NOT URGE CATHOLICS TO SUPPORT
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SECURITY FORCES UNTIL POLICING PROPOSALS IN SUNNINGDALE

PHASED WITHDRAWAL OF BRITISH TROOPS, AND TURNOVER OF SECURITY RESPONSIBILITIES TO COUNCIL OF IRELAND.

6. A FEW OBSERVERS HERE (EX-UNIONIST EX-COMMERCE MINISTER ROBIN BAILLIE, FOR EXAMPLE) AGREE WITH VIEW REPORTEDLY HELD BY SOME BRITISH LABOUR MPS THAT BRITISH TROOP WITHDRAWAL, ASIDE FROM ITS ADVANTAGES TO BRITAIN, TAKE ANTI-BRITISH WIND OUT OF IRISH REPUBLICAN SAILS, AND FORCE TWO COMMUNITIES TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR NEGOTIATING POLITICAL SOLUTION. PROPONENTS OF THIS VIEW GO ON TO ARGUE THAT EVEN IF THERE WERE OUTBURSTS OF VIOLENCE IT WOULD SOON SUBSIDE, AND THAT OVER LONG TERM THERE WOULD BE LESS COST IN LIFE AND PROPERTY THAN IN CONTINUATION OF PRESENT SITUATION.

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